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Solomons orchid, *Dendrobiun spectabile.* Orchid courtesy of G.F.C.Dennis collection. Photo by Mike McCoy.

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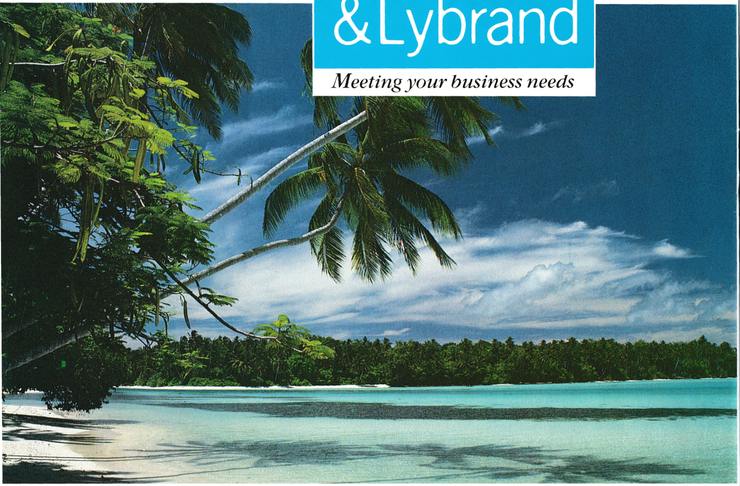

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As we spread our wings it is important that we do not lose sight of our people, our culture, our home. In this special issue of "Solomons" we present an article on each of the seven Provinces that together comprise Solomon Islands. I trust that visitors, residents and citizens alike will all learn more about our beautiful and peaceful Islands.

Have a pleasant journey.

— Brown Saua, chairman of the board

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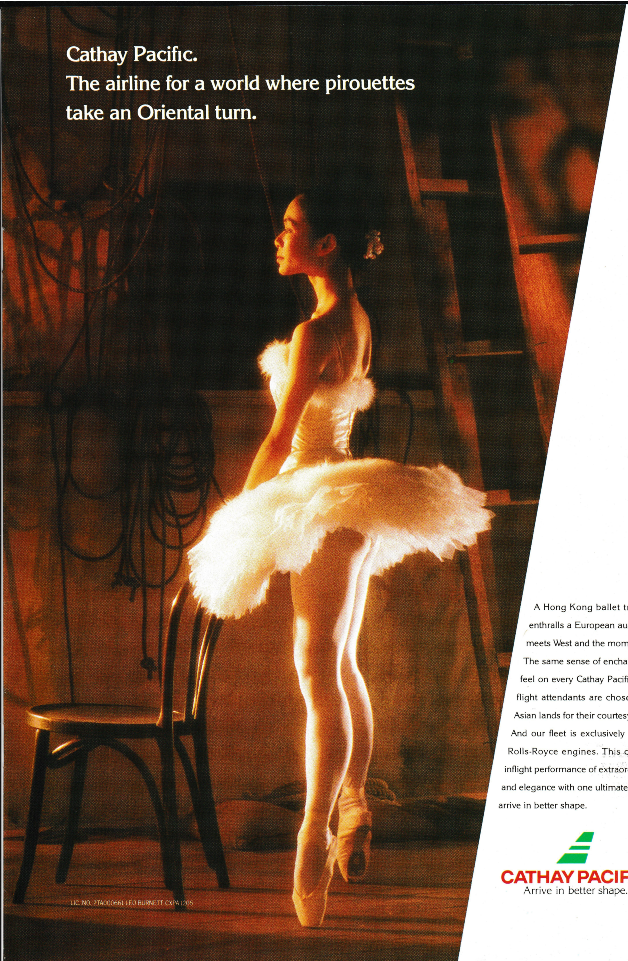
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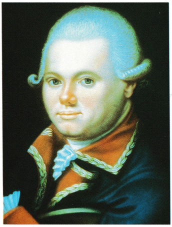
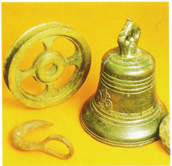


The explorer: La Perouse

THE HUNT FOR LA PEROUSE

A joint Solomon Islands-New Caledonian expedition heads for Vanikoro. It continues the search for clues to the last days of a man who rates with James Cook as an explorer and navigator of the Pacific

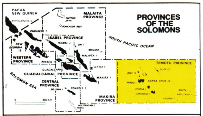


Objects recovered, in 1826, from the wreck of the La Perouse expedition

What happened more than 200 years ago to Jean-Francis de Galaup, better known as Comte La Perouse, with his two ships and more than 200 seamen? Just off the coast of the island of Vanikoro, in the southern part of the Solomon Islands, marine archaeologists have established beyond doubt that the remnants of two sailing ships are those of a man who rates with Britain's James Cook as an explorer and navigator of the Pacific. In July and August a joint expedition of the Solomon Islands National Museum and New Caledonia's Association Saloman will return to Vanikoro hoping to find messages left ashore by the last survivors of the

Words: Robert Keith-Reid • Photos: Queensland Museum

French diver works on the site of the wreck of the La Perouse expedition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VANIKORO

La Perouse expedition and evidence of how the ships were wrecked there. One of the French team will be a La Perouse descendant.

In 1785 La Perouse was commissioned by Louis XVI to make a four-year journey of exploration in the Pacific. Rounding Cape Horn, the two French ships, Boussole and Astrolabe, explored the Californian coast; lost 21 men drowned off Alaska; visited China; lost more men killed in Samoa; skirted Fiji; and in 1788 arrived at Botany Bay, Australia, only four days after the arrival of the first convict fleet sent there by Britain. La Perouse, who has a Sydney suburb named after him, was received courteously by Captain Arthur Phillips. Indeed, despite rivalry between Britain and France, the British scientist, Sir Joseph Banks, had sent to La Perouse from London two items of Cooks' navigation instruments.

The 230 men of the expedition spent six weeks with the British. Then La Perouse gave Phillips letters for forwarding to France; the French ships set sail for Tonga, New Caledonia, the Solomon Islands and then the Indian Ocean, planning to reach home the following year. They were never seen again. By late 1789 anxiety was felt in France for a man who by then was a national hero. In 1792 the Chevalier Bruni d'Entrecasteaux was despatched to look for the missing expedition. In the same year the British warship Pandora sailed to within two or three kilometres of Vanikoro, where some of the expedition's survivors were probably still alive. In the following year d'Entrecasteaux's ship passed close to the island without stop, d'Entrecasteaux dying from fever a few days later.

In 1826 Peter Dillon, an Irishman, encountered Martin Buchart, a Prussian, at

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Where the Boussole and Astrolabe lie ... Vanikoro island and its reef

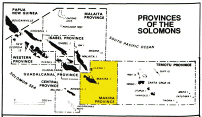
Tikopia island, about 250 kilometres from Vanikoro, and was shown items from a wreck at Vanikoro. At Vanikoro the following year Dillon recovered a small bell, hooks and a small wheel that could have been part of a clock or navigation instruments. And the islanders told him of a great storm 40 years previously in which two ships had been wrecked. There had been only four or perhaps six survivors from one ship, which broke up quickly. There had been many survivors from the other ship, Dillon heard, but they had built a small boat from wreckage and sailed away. Two men had been left behind; one had died only two years before and the other had left the island. Dillon bartered for salvaged material and in 1828 Captain Dumont D'Urville reached the island to recovery anchors and cannons that proved fairly conclusively that the mystery of the lost expedition had been partly solved.

The remnants of the wrecks lay undisturbed for the next 140 years, until 1957. Then a New Zealand resident of Vanuatu, Rees Discombe, located one wreck and two years later made a second exploration. But it wasn't until 1986 that fully equipped scientific expedition, mounted by the Queensland Museum, Association Saloman, the La Perouse Association of Albi, the navigator's birthplace in France, and Solomons Museum probed the fate of the expedition in detail. One wreck, probably the Boussole, lies mostly in a straight-sided gutter of the island's fringing reef. Cannon, copper sheets and iron bars lie in 10 metres of water at the landward end of the gutter, with other remnants spread along an 18-metre to 60-metre deep line that ends with a plunge into the deep. Archaeologists theorise that caught in a storm near the reef, the Boussole dropped her anchors hoping to avoid being driven ashore. She swung around, stern to the reef, was driven relentlessly backwards and had her bottom ripped out so quickly that she sank before many survivors could escape from her. The presumed remnants of Astrolabe lie further to the north, scattered inside a shallow area of reef near a slot called False Pass — a feature which looks like a clear passage into the reef but isn't. It's theorised that this ship went to the assistance of her sister, deliberately entering False Passage in the belief that she could get behind the stricken ship. But she too ploughed into the coral, though in a style that enabled most of her crew to abandon the wreck and get ashore.

Clearing away sand with a suction dredge, the 1986 expedition's recovered six pieces of eight, Chinese coins, pieces of porcelain, shoe buckles, pewter plate, a candlestick, trade beads, two bronze knives collected in North America, medallions, bits of navigation equipment and part of one of the 50 dragoon guard helmets carried as trade gifts. Bits of silver filigree, dividers, trigger guards, wooden pulleys, a glass jar and four ceramic pots were other finds.

There's no doubt the identity of the wrecks now and human bones, one of them a woman's cheekbone — probably of a woman who was in the crew disguised as a man — have been sent to France for burial at Albi.

Ashore, digging revealed traces of logs which may have been a stockade built by La Perouse's desperate men, lost on an uncharted island half a world from home. Were any messages left by them? This question is one that Alec Rukia, head of the Solomon museum's archaeology unit, hopes to solve ashore while the 26-member French team dives in search of more relics. Vanikoro's people are interested in the wrecks. A monument to La Perouse stands near the vicinity of the remains, on ground rented by Association Saloman from villagers who undertook to paint it once a year and keep an area round it cleared. Now the association has raised $S90,000 for the construction at Vanikoro of a museum to house everything recovered from the wrecks. "It will be the island's responsibility to maintain the building and have a qualified person in charge of it, " Rukia said •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SANTA CATALINA

It happens every May-June

Conch shell horns blare. Spears hurtle through the air to bounce off the war shields held by their targets. Young women adorn themselves with a make-up of mud and hordes of small boys race at night through the island's settlements, scaring evil spirits away by flailing the ground with coconut frond canes. The spear fights are nearly the real thing, since the spears hurled from one opposing group of men to another are meant to hit. Sometimes they do if a man isn't agile in fending the incoming missile off with his shield. But really it's all fun. For this is the festival of Wogasia (pronounced wo-ah-sia). For about a week of each year, in May or June, it occupies the attention of all the community of about 300 people on the small island of Santa Catalina, off the eastern end of the island of Makira.

Moffat Wasuka, a teacher and educationalist now working with the South Pacific Board for Educational Assessment, was born at Santa Catalina. He has fond memories of the excitement of a festival he believes was once quite widely celebrated on neighbouring Makira but today survives only at his home island. "I'm not sure of the origins, but it is a sort of thanksgiving at the end of the harvest, that there has been peace and no disease," he explains. "Thanks are directed to the old gods — the god of the trees, the god of the herbs, and the god of the coconut, who is a special one. It occurs with the rising of the new moon. The time is recognised by a particular chief who has had knowledge of the festival, and the ceremonies and the prayers offered, handed down to him. Only he knows the time, and when it comes he tells the people to ready for it. The men go fishing and the women go into the bush to collect foods. We don't eat pigs during the festival — I suppose this is because there were no pigs at the time the festival began."

While the older folk of Santa Catalina's half-dozen hamlets collect food, girls and boys unearth the conch shells used as horns from where they've lain since the previous year, and wash

Santa Catalina

Words: Robert Keith-Reid
Photos: Mike McCoy

Boys ready for Wogasia

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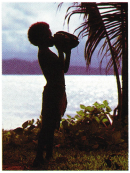
them in a lagoon or stream. The horns begin to be blown about midnight at the time designated by the chief as the opening of Wogasia. For ensuing days there's little let-up. "Then the fireworks start," recalls Wasuka. "Village boys run from house to house beating the ground around them with coconut frond stems as noisily as they can so that bad spirits are scared away. People in the houses set fire to material and branches and throw the fire at the boys."



Conch shell signals Wogasia

Down at the beach, waiting for dawn, the young men and women of the community congregate, singing and socialising, waiting for the spear fight. Separated by a couple of dozen metres, two groups of men stand opposed, young, old, and not so old, brandishing long wooden barbless spears and carrying small hardwood shields. The size of these makes them look inadequate. Handled with dexterity they actually effectively deflect a flying spear. "The fighters throw to hit men on the other side, and sometimes people get hurt," says Wasuka. "Some of the old men go into it to work off a grudge or get a younger man to try to hit someone for them. A man died back in 1985, but usually the shields keep everyone from being injured. If things start to get out out of hand the girls move in to stop the fight. If you do get hurt, it's believed you've done something wrong, or have a disease, or failed to observe customary preparations properly."

At Santa Catalina all the people belong to one of two tribal lines. There can been no intermarriage within one line; a marriage partner has to come from the other side. After the spear fight a vine rope is stretched across the beach, each end held by a man from one of the two lines. Everyone present then pairs with a person of their own sex, but of the other line, to pass under the vine. The reason? Lost in time, but this custom must be observed. "But I think it is a device for everyone to recognise where they come from and who potential marriage partners are," says Wasuka. Back at the villages massive food preparation is in progress. In the afternoon, about four o'clock, young women appear to parade formally adorned with specially made grass skirts but also caked thickly with mud. Those conch shells are still sounding and the spearfighters engaged in not-so-mock battle again, this time more fiercely.

As the sun moves down to the sea the master of ceremonies — the chief who had proclaimed the time of the festival — recites prayers of thanks in a language known now only to himself. Next, there is a mass movement back to the sea, with everyone rushing into the water to discard spears, skirts, their mud make-up and all other accoutrements of the festival. "That's the end of it. You don't return to the village with anything or you return with sickness or bad luck," explains Wasuka. "For the next two or three days the people sit in groups of perhaps for, two from each line, to feast. Then, that's the end — finish. You don't talk about it any more."

As a boy in his Santa Catalina village of Mwaniwaro, Wasuka awaited each year's Wogasia festival with anticipation. "It was the best time of the year. Everyone likes it because compared with other ceremonies it's cheap. You don't need to spend any money, just collect food. If you have a daughter you will buy her tobacco or cigarettes to smoke at the beach, but that's all. Over the years the festival has change. It is not so spectacular as it used to be. But people are interested in reviving it and it's getting going again. I went back to the island at the time of festival a few years ago and was urged to join the spear fight. But I'm out of practice and too slow for it now so I just took it easy in the village." •

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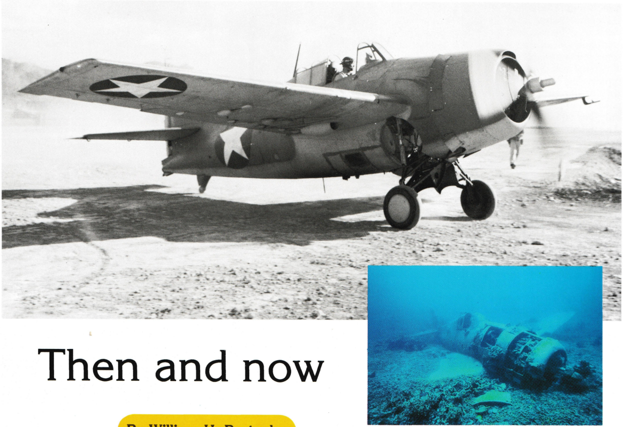


Then and now

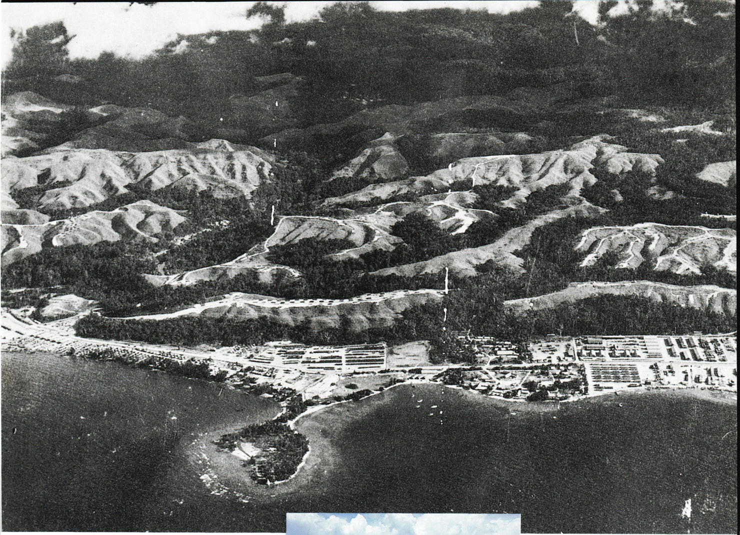
By William H. Bartsch

***Top:** A United States Wildcat Fighter taxis at Henderson Field. 1943. **Bottom:**The same type of aircraft in a grave of coral beneath the sea. 1990.*

Of all the famous campaigns of World War Two, Guadalcanal stands near the top in the memory of anyone who was over the age of six at the time. And for good reason — it was a massive clash, bitterly fought between American and Japanese forces on the land, in the sky and on the sea. When the six-month struggle was over, in February 1943, the Japanese had suffered one of the major defeats of the Pacific war. They had left behind 21,000 dead of the 32,000 ground troops they had committed to the campaign. Lying at the bottom of the ocean were 26 of their warships and over the land and sea were scattered the remains of 800 of their aircraft and 2400 pilots and crew. The cost to the Americans had been heavy too in a campaign whose outcome was in doubt until December 1942. The United States Navy alone lost more men and ships while supporting the Guadalcanal operation than it had in its entire previous history. But never again would the Japanese take the offensive.

To commemorate the 50th anniversary of the start of this momentous campaign, an American, an Australian, a Japanese and a Solomon Islander are joining to produce a volume that will honour the sacrifices of both sides. It will follow a "then and now" approach — the battle sites and war material of 1942-43 days will be compared in word and picture with the sites and physical remains today. The first part of the book will provide the reader with a resume of the major battles, the text juxtaposed with combatant accounts of their experiences as recorded in diaries and memoirs. Throughout the account, an even-handed approach will be followed, with equal attention to Japanese and American sides. Arrangements are being made to publish both English and Japanese editions.

How the idea and arrangements for this book developed is a story in itself. As a nine-year old in Washington, DC, I became obsessed with the Guadalcanal campaign through seeing movies such as "Guadalcanal Diary" and following newspaper, magazine and radio accounts that gave wide publicity to the life-and-death struggle. My fascination with the campaign gradually faded as I grew up. But when, as a United Nations career official, I took up a position in Fiji in 1973, so close to the Solomon Islands of childhood fantasy, memories of the great battles on Guadalcanal came flooding back. In 1975, on the way back to Europe after finishing my two-year tour, I arranged to



***Top:** The Point Cruz area of Guadalcanal (later to become the capital, Honiara) during the war years when it was a vast American base. **Left:** The same scene today — Honiara, capital of Solomon Islands.*

spend two weeks in the Solomons, touring old battle sites in search of war remains. Eventually an account of my experiences was published in an English magazine devoted to "then and now" accounts of the great World War Two battles.

In 1985 and again in 1989, I returned to Solomon Islands on consultancy work for the World Bank and the United Nations. It was during my 1989 visit that I met Jackson Lead at the Solomon Islands Tourist Authority, a young man with a keen interest in the Guadalcanal campaign himself. Jackson specialised in taking visitors to the battle sites; he showed me places I had not visited during my previous trips. An idea began to develop — why not combine forces with Jackson and produce a "then and now" volume on the Guadalcanal campaign? The timing would be excellent — in three years it would be the 50th anniversary of the beginning of the campaign. Jackson was enthused with the idea and we made plans to meet again in 1990 on Guadalcanal and get the project underway.

On my return to Washington, I made a beeline to the United States Marine Corps Historical Research Centre to check its collection of diaries and memoirs of Marine Corps participants on Guadalcanal. There I discovered the collection of a Marine Corps veteran who had donated his file of correspondence with a Japanese combatant who had been providing information to his erstwhile foe on the Japanese side of the battles they had waged against each other. I was struck by the depth of research reflected in his letters and, with the support of the Marine, Harry Horsman, quickly established contact with him. It turned out that the Japanese, Akio Tani, was the former commander of a battery of 105mm cannons that shelled Henderson Field regularly from mid-October 1942; the actual "Pistol Pete" of Guadalcanal infamy! Tani accepted my offer to join the project as the Japanese contributor and soon began "firing off" letters to me in response to my detailed

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requests for information with the same rapidity he had lobbed shells into Henderson Field 47 years earlier.

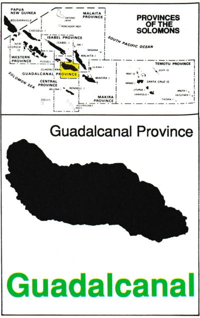
But what about the "now" photographs I needed to compare with the "then" pictures I had located in Marine Corps and Army collections at the National Archives in Washington? I could try to take them myself, of course, but any future visit to Guadalcanal would be of short duration and not necessarily during the best season for the extensive photography required. I now decided to contact Mike McCoy, an Australian photographer resident in Solomon Islands whose colour work I'd seen and admired for some time. Mike's response to my query of possible interest in collaborating was positive.

The team of four was now set, the first time such diverse nationalities had been mobilised for a book on the Pacific War. And we had a publisher already. Crawford House Press of Australia, Mike's own publisher, was as enthusiastic about the project as we were and promised to produce the Japanese language version for the market in Japan.

In January 1990 I returned to Guadalcanal for a week on yet another United Nations assignment and made final arrangements with Jackson and Mike. We tramped over Bloody Ridge together and lined up angles for the "now" photographs, explored underground Marine Corps command posts, and visited the fiercely contested Gifu area near Mount Austen as well as Alligator Creek — the site of Colonel Ichiki's suicidal attack on the newly-arrived Marines (see Solomons no. 1, 1990).

These days Akio Tani and I are piecing together the dramatic accounts of Japanese and American participants in the main battles that will constitute the first part of the book. Mike and Jackson are scouring the island and offshore waters for war remains and tramping over the hills and ravines where the great battles were fought to obtain the "now" photographs for the second part of the book. They are also meeting the Japanese teams of veterans, visiting Guadalcanal to search for the bones of their deceased comrades, for photographs and interviews of their reaction to their return to the "island of death" — as they remember Guadalcanal. Ironically, the Japanese have been receiving help in locating burial sites from their erstwhile American foes. Friendships between the two have developed — friendships based on the unique shared experience of having fought and lived through the agony, terror and misery of the campaign that changed the direction of the Pacific War.•

(William H. Bartsch is long-serving American official of the International Labour Office, a specialised agency of the United Nations. His free times goes into research and writing on the Pacific War. Later this year, Texas A&M University Press will publish his account of the experiences of American fighter pilots in the Philippines campaign of 1942-43, entitled Doomed at the Start. He currently lives and works in Geneva, Switzerland.)


PROVINCES OF THE SOLOMONS
PAPUA NEW GUINEA
BOUGAINVILLE
CHOISEUL I.
ONTONG JAVA
RONCADOR REEF
MALAITA PROVINCE
ISABEL PROVINCE
ISABEL I.
DAI I.
SIKAIANA
MALAITA I.
NEW GEORGIA IS.
WESTERN PROVINCE
RUSSELL IS.
SOUTH PACIFIC OCEAN
GUADALCANAL
GUADALCANAL PROVINCE
SOLOMON SEA
CENTRAL PROVINCE
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SOLOMON ISLANDS

Your information guide

- **Climate:** Tropically warm and humid with coastal day temperatures averaging 28C. April to November tends to be drier, and November to April wetter.
- **What To Wear:** Light and casual. Keep brief beach wear for beaches.
- **Immigration:** Commonwealth, United States, and most West European visitors do not need holiday visas but need return or onward tickets. People intending to work must have a work permit.
- **Honiara:** The capital is eight kilometres from Henderson International Airport.
- **Airport Tax:** $S20 payable by passengers boarding international flights.
- **Health:** Malaria is a problem. Take anti-malarial medication a week before arrival, once a week during your stay, and for four weeks after departure. Consult your chemist or doctor about an appropriate brand or tablet. Maloprin is usually recommended.
- **Currency:** $50, $20, $10, $5, and $2 Solomon Islands notes; coins are $1, 50c, 20c, 10c, 5c, 2c, 1c.
- **Business Hours:** Government and some business offices Monday to Friday 8am to 4.30pm with a one-hour lunch break normally beginning at noon. Shops and some offices open Saturdays 8am - noon.
- **Banks:** National Bank of Solomon Islands, ANZ Banking Group, Westpac, Mondays to Fridays, 8.30am to 3pm.
- **Tipping:** Not expected and not encouraged.
- **Transport:** Taxis and buses in Honiara. Rental cars: Avis and Budget. International air: Air Niugini, Air Pacific, Qantas, Solomon Airlines serve Henderson Airport. Domestic: Solomon Airlines operates to 23 destinations.
- **Electricity:** 240 volts in Honiara and some outer island centres.
- **Radio:** The Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation broadcasts daily in English and Pidgin. No television.
- **Newspapers:** Solomon Star, Solomon Toktok, The Nius.
- **Honiara activities:** Golf, tennis, scuba diving, walks, battlefield tours, swimming, sailing, bush walking and fishing.

The provinces

Guadalcanal. Land area: 5336 square kilometres. Population: 88,800 (including Honiara). Highest point 2447 metres. National capital: Honiara.

Central. Land area: 1276 square kilometres. Population: 19,000. Highest point: 510 metres. Provincial capital: Tulagi.

Western. Land area: 8573 square kilometres. Population: 58,000. Highest point: 1661 metres. Provincial capital: Gizo.

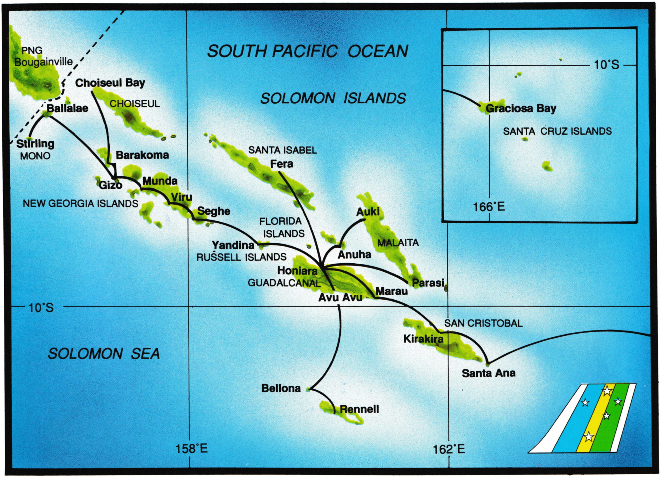
Ysabel. Land area: 4014 square kilometres. Population: 5000. Highest point: 1392 metres. Provincial capital: Buala.

Malaita. Land area: 4243 square kilometres. Population: 82,000. Highest point: 1303 metres. Provincial capital: Auki.

Makira. Land area: 3188 square kilometres. Population: 23,000. Highest point: 1250 metres. Provincial capital: Kirakira.

Temotu. Land area: 926 square kilometres. Population: 16,000. Highest point: 923 metres. Provincial capital: Lata.

The world of Solomon Airlines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Choiseul Bay
CHOISEUL
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NEW GEORGIA ISLANDS
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SOLOMON ISLANDS
SANTA ISABEL
Fera
FLORIDA
ISLANDS
Yandina
RUSSELL ISLANDS
Honiara
GUADALCANAL
Avu Avu
Auki
Anuha
MALAITA
Parasi
Marau
SAN CRISTOBAL
Kirakira
Santa Ana
10°S
SOLOMON SEA
Bellona
Rennell
158°E
162°E
10°S
Graciosa Bay
SANTA CRUZ ISLANDS
166°E

Domestic Routes

Solomon Islands
Size: 27,556 square kilometres. Population: 302,000. Capital: Honiara: Products: Copra, palm oil, tuna, timber, cocoa, gold.

Australia
Size: 7.6 million square kilometres. Population: 16.8 million. Capital: Canberra. Products: Wheat, wool,meat, sugar, minerals, manufactured goods.

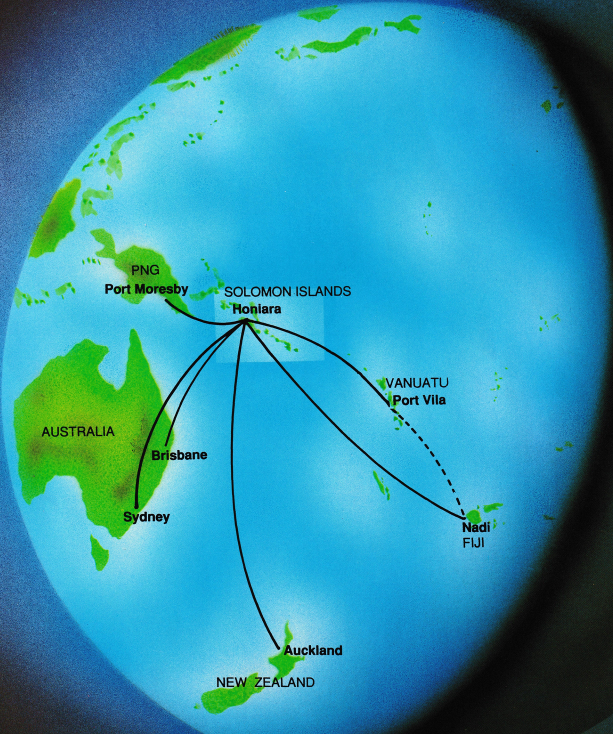
New Zealand
Size: 264,000 square kilometres. Population: 3.4 million. Capital: Wellington. Products: Meat, wool, dairy products, timber, fruit and vegetables, manufactured products.

Papua New Guinea
Size: 463,000 square kilometres. Population: 3.9 million. Capital: Port Moresby. Products: gold, copper, copra, timber, coffee, cocoa.

Fiji
Size: 18,300 square kilometres. Population: 720,000. Capital: Suva. Products: sugar, coconut oil, timber, tuna, ginger, gold, manufactured goods.

Vanuatu
Size: 12,180 square kilometres. Population: 130,000. Capital: Port Vila. Products: copra, meat, timber, cocoa.

International Routes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Guadalcanal — the aircraft

Guadalcanal. The name of the largest of the Solomons Islands and one placed in history as the place of turning point of the Pacific war. Now the name has a vital new significance for the Solomon Islands as the Boeing 737-200 jet *Guadalcanal* roars in and out of Henderson Airport delivering passengers and freight direct to or from Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, and Fiji.

Guadalcanal is the first jet of Solomon Airlines, delivered on June 2 in the airline's green, blue and yellow livery and marked with a restyled logo, Solomons, along its fuselage. Her arrival at Henderson for a formal welcome, naming ceremony and blessing was the culmination of months of meticulous planning, negotiation, preparation and training by and for the airline's staff. *Guadalcanal* is also an initial $4-5 million investment to boost the Solomon Islands economy significantly by stimulating the inflow of business and tourism and carrying such high-value perishable commodities as seafood and tropical produce to export markets.

In March 1989, the airline chartered an Air Pacific Boeing 737 to operate the Honiara-Brisbane service previously run by the Fiji airline. Air Pacific's decision to replace its Boeing 737 with a larger aircraft which could not at present be operated to Henderson economically gave Solomon Airlines an opportunity to advance by two years its plan for its own jet. It emerges as a significant force in South West Pacific civil aviation.

With *Guadalcanal*, the airline has taken over jointly-operated Air Niugini flights from Port Moresby to Honiara and Vila and jointly-operated Air Pacific flights from Fiji. Air Niugini and Air Pacific now buy blocks of seats aboard Guadalcanal for resale, and it is hoped to reach a similar arrangement with such other airlines as Air Vanuatu.

Guadalcanal has been leased from an international leasing corporation for an initial two years, with an option for a third year. There are plans for the eventual purchase by the airline of a Boeing 737-300. Air New Zealand was contracted to assist with the selection of *Guadalcanal* and to help with engineering and maintenance services and the training of cabin crew. More than 30 extra staff, including six pilots, 18 cabin crew, and engineers and other support workers have been recruited to cater for the needs of the jet service.

Guadalcanal has 88 economy and 12 executive *Belama* class seats, with *Belama* class passengers receiving first-class level service. The inaugural timetable takes the jet on two flights a week to Brisbane, including one to Sydney via Brisbane, once a week to Auckland, Port Vila, and Port Moresby, and twice a week to Nadi. The service to Auckland is expected to generate new business and tourist traffic while the operation of what in effect will be a direct Port Moresby-Honiara-Vila-Nadi link should attract a steadily increasing volume of business from travellers who previously had to travel via Brisbane.

By the time that Solomon Airlines is ready to re-equip with its own Boeing 737-300 it is likely to be preparing to open tourist traffic-orientated services to Cairns in North Queensland and to Guam, where a flight would connect with the inflow of Japanese tourists.

The months of intensive work that went into preparations for putting *Guadalcanal* into service were complemented by the upgrading of the airline's flights to 24 domestic destinations. Twin Otter and Islander planes are being refurbished and repainted while a Twin Otter leased to another airline will return the Solomons by the end of the year to meet the local passenger and freight traffic demands.

Guadalcanal's cabin crew win praise

For thousands of passengers the quality of service from a team of five members from the *Guadalcanal's* 18 cabin crew is likely to be their longest lasting impression of the Solomon Airlines jet style of service.

Picked from scores of applicants, *Guadalcanal's* cabin attendants are the product of weeks of intensive training at Henderson Airport and then four weeks at Auckland under the direction of one of Air New Zealand's top instructors, Peter Manarangi. "They've been a delight to work with," he said near the end of the course. "I have never had such attentive or willing pupils. There's no doubt in my mind that they will be a credit to their airline."

For the first 12 months of their flying career the crew will work with an Air New Zealand attendant who will be aboard each flight. The crew are Yalu Revo, Francis Cheka, Linda Bosa, Jamie Vokia, John Urasi, John Kili, Wilson Iroi, Mansley Usimanu, Maslyn Pio, Watson Otota, Patterson Fito, Mariana Tomlinson, Eva Waketaku, Margaret Palmer, Therese Leong, Asiteta Tabe, Marilyn Takoa and Christopher Bosa. •

Cabin crew during training at Henderson Airfield

TAMBEA VILLAGE UNPRETENTIOUS, UNSPOILT.

By far best way to spend several days in peaceful seclusion is to live the simple life at Tambea Village Tourist Resort. Tambea is probably the nearest you will ever get to that idyllic Pacific Island existence which is a part of every city dwellers' dream world.

The resort is 45kms west of Honiara at the western tip of Guadalcanal Island set in gardens beside a sheltered beach and is partly owned by villagers who live in nearby Tambea.

Tambea consists of 24 Melanesian-style bungalows set among palms around the sheltered cove. The bungalows are large, cool and airy and all have inclosed toilet facilities with the necessary fixtures. The dining hall, built chalet style, can accommodate up to 50 diners. It also includes an area for dancing and singing.

Horse riding, bush walking, fishing, scuba diving or just paddling an outrigger canoe at sunset are some of the attractions.

Moreover, Tambea overlooks Savo Island, a sleeping volcano shrouded in jungle. Between them is a stretch of water, deceptively calm which is officially known as Savo Straights. But to naval men, it is Ironbottom Sound, the graveyard of no fewer than 50 capital fighting ships and their thousands of American, Australian and Japanese Crew.

Tambea is idyllic because it is completely unpretentious and unspoilt. It gives an amazing sense of liberation, probably because you are completely unencumbered by modern technology and all its associated demands.

GUADALCANAL

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RENNELL IS RIGHT

It is probably the finest example of a raised coral atoll in the world. And, for its size, it is likely the least environmentally disturbed island in the South Pacific. This is Rennell, 80 percent of its 650 square kilometres virtually untouched rainforest; the remaining fifth, a brackish water lake — Lake Te-Nggano — the largest lake in the insular Pacific. Rennell has more endemic forms of wildlife, vertebrate and invertebrate, than any other island of the Solomons; it is possessed of a wild, pristine beauty and, not too surprisingly, is being considered for World Heritage listing.

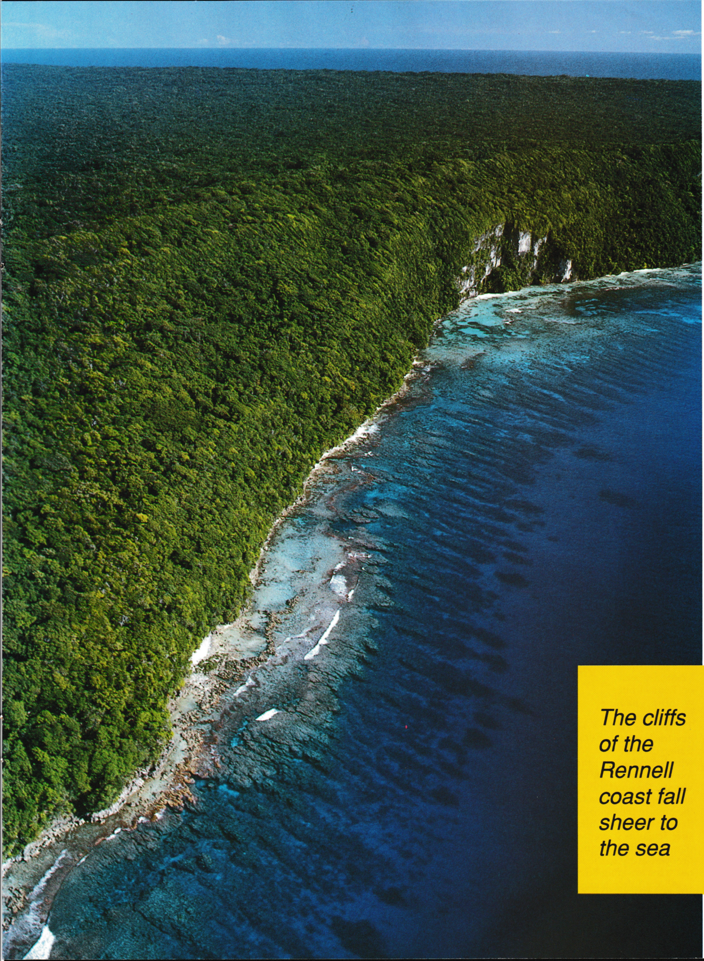
Dawn, Lake Te-Nggano

Up until the present time, for all practical purposes, the only pressure that has been put on Rennell's environment has been that of the subsistence agriculture practised by the Rennellese people. They have cleared small tracts of land for growing crops of taro and pawpaw and limited amounts of other vegetables and fruit. For Rennell's soil is poor and is but the thinnest veneer over the substrata of porous limestone. The effect of this agriculture has been virtually negligible, the operative word is indeed subsistence, for the Rennellese people have only maintained a level of cropping to support their small population of little more than a thousand people. They have been able to live in harmony with their environment, fragile as it may be.

The Rennellese people are Polynesian; their ancestors settled on the island many centuries ago, having made the long sea voyage from their probable original home of Uvea Island (in the Wallis Group) in the large ocean-going sailing canoes for which the Polynesians are renowned. The topography of Rennell however, must have presented formidable obstacles to those early seafaring colonists. Around virtually all of its coast, limestone cliffs fall sheer to the sea for 100 metres or more. It is only in a scant few sheltered bays that beaches exist and a safe landing can be made. And, making the shore, they encountered another problem: there is no surface freshwater on the island. Eventually they found the few small freshwater springs in various places on the island. But an adequate supply of drinking water would have been, and to some extent continues to be, a difficulty. The lake water is too saline to drink and nowadays most of Rennell's freshwater comes from rain catchment.

It was the unique character of Rennell's environment that brought an Australian ABC television film crew to the island in late December 1989. Nick Stuart is the reporter and narrator for the programme 'Survival'. He said: "The purpose of the series is to look at the environment. Scientists have been pointing out that there are a number of environmental issues that the world as a whole will have to deal with. These include the ones which have received a lot of publicity — driftnetting; the preservation of tropical rainforests with their great species diversity; the Greenhouse Effect and the growing population of the world and the resulting pressures that are placed on the environment, 'Survival' will consider these and other issues and try and determine what is necessary as steps for us to take so that we can survive. The importance of Rennell to the world is not yet fully understood. It may well be that a cure for AIDS may be found in a rainforest such as Rennell's; we just don't know. Rainforests are unique habitats and very fragile ones. So we wanted to come to Rennell before development occurred — development in whatever form the people here choose. One of the things that we have been both surprised and excited by, is the fact that the Rennell people are well aware of the broad conservation issues. But they are faced with a real dilemma. Are they going to go for development which could take the form of cash industries like logging or mining? Or, are they going to preserve this unique rainforest and instead look at the possibility of World Heritage Listing?

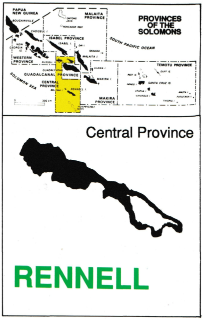
Words and photos: Mike McCoy



The cliffs of the Rennell coast fall sheer to the sea

We realise it is a decision that only the Rennell people can make."

At 7.30am the ground mist covers the grassy airfield in the low depression at the western end of the island. The pilot makes several passes at an altitude of 50 metres, attempting to disperse the mist with the wash of the propellers. But he is unsuccessful and we are obliged to fly to the small neighbouring island of Bellona to land and remove the door of the Solomon Airlines' Islander aircraft. The removal of the door is essential for the aerial filming of both the forest and the broad expanse of Lake Te-Nggano. For it is from the air that the full splendour of Rennell can be appreciated. From coast to coast the forest canopy forms an unbroken mantle; the single dirt road linking east and west Rennell is invisible, hidden beneath the overhanging trees.



Rennellese girl

From the airfield to the lake is an exercise in both physical fitness and carefully planned logistics. Henry Teho, an official of the Ministry of Tourism and Aviation, had travelled to Rennell a week before the film crew arrived to make the necessary preparations for their visit. It had been nine years since I had last been on Rennell but nothing had really changed. There was a new tractor and trailer, the only wheeled vehicle on the island, but the four-hour ride to the coast at Lavanggu was still the same bone-jarring, backside-numbing journey it had always been. And the hour in the canoe from Lavanggu to the small beach at Tuhunggango was as spectacular as it ever was; passing over the crystalline turquoise waters that dropped away to the indigo depths beneath the towering limestone walls.

Above Tuhunggango there is a small notch, a low point, in the otherwise uniform stretch of the coastal rim. To reach this notch though, requires some pretty strenuous physical exertion, for it is a tough, steep climb up a series of cement steps. "Ten storeys", the Rennell people jocularly refer to this stairway. From the rim it is an easy four-kilometre walk to the lake. The track through the forest is well-used, the limestone polished smooth in places as a result of the passage of countless feet, for this path — and the stairway — are virtually the only link between the villages on the lake and the rest of Rennell.

A rest house has been established at Tahamatangi on the edge of the lake near Te-Nggano village. The rooms are small though quite comfortable and the meals — local fare — are delicious. This rest house is a recently built commercial venture, designed to attract the more adventurous travellers — the "eco-tourists". Glancing through the visitor's book indicates that there has been a reasonable trade in the few months that it has been operating; attracting people of diverse nationalities. One of our Rennellese carriers tells me that the last group to stay here were several quite elderly women who were not at all daunted by the tractor, canoe and "ten storey" climb.

The filming schedule is tight because of limited time but subject matter is abundant. Large white Sacred Ibis forage through the villages like domestic chickens. Around the edge of the lake cormorants perch, their wings spread to dry in the warmth of the sun. And, in the shallow water, tugihono slowly swim from crevice to crevice in the pitted limestone bottom, nosing amongst the debris for the gobies that form the sole item of their diet. *Tugihono* is the Rennellese name for *Laticauda crockeri*, a species of sea snake that occurs in Lake Te-Nggano and nowhere else in the world. Although the snake is highly venomous, it is extremely docile and for all practical purposes is harmless.

Stuart, after snorkeling over the shallows of the lake in front of the rest house, remarked with some surprise that the lake bottom looked like "a dead coral reef". His observation was quite accurate for this is exactly what the lake once was — a coral filled lagoon, the surrounding land an atoll. For the massive forces within the Earth's crust, the shifting of tectonic plates, raised the whole mass out of the sea. Geologists reckon this uplifting to have occurred at least five times over many millions of years.

The filming concentrates on the singular character of so much of Rennell's environment and its people. The breathtaking silhouette of a small islet at dawn as the rising sun strikes the fronds of the coconut palms and forms a starburst of light, the image reflected in the still waters of the lake. At Te-Nggano village an old woman weaves an intricately patterned bag from the leaves of Pandanus, her body and arms displaying an equally detailed design of traditional tattoos. Beneath a spray of the magnificent mauve Rennell orchid, *Dendrobium rennellensis*, a monitor lizard lies half submerged in the water, its metre-long body peppered with fine yellow spots that serve as an effective camouflage in the dappled sunlight. A cormorant, startled by our approach, disappears beneath the surface of the lake in a heart-beat of time, reappearing 20 metres away a few seconds later.

Nick, dressed in his best "bush" outfit of safari shirt, jeans and boots, does his dialogues to the camera. He stresses the problems the Rennellese now face: "No-one appreciates the beauty of Rennell more than its people — they do not want to see their island and their lives disrupted by large scale development. But the influence of a Western consumer-based world and the desire for a cash economy offer a very tempting trade-off for the natural resources. A delicate compromise seems the only answer."

Late in the afternoon of our last day at the lake, I walk into the forest for a kilometre or more. An earlier rain squall has left the leaves heavy with droplets and the ground soggy underfoot. The air is still and humid, the light dimly green. As I rest on a fallen tree, a pair of small olive-yellow birds with a bright halo of white around their eyes regard me from their perch nearby. These are the endemic Rennell White-eyes; curious and unafraid they come closer. I try to remain motionless so as not to frighten them until finally they are no more than an arm's reach away. It is truly a magic moment.

•(Enquiries regarding visits to Rennell and accommodation at Tahamatangi rest house should be made to the Solomon Islands Tourist Authority, PO Box 321, Honiara, Solomon Islands.)

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On Malaita, making money is an art

Seashells often change hands for considerable sums of money. Collectors may pay thousands of dollars for rare cowries and cone shells. It is a risky market though, as the price tends to be a reflection of the rarity of the species and quite often the rarity, and so the value, of a shell may drop suddenly as more of the same species are found. So, as a hedge against inflation, shell collecting is a dubious investment. But not so on the island of Malaita in the Solomons, for here seashells are money.

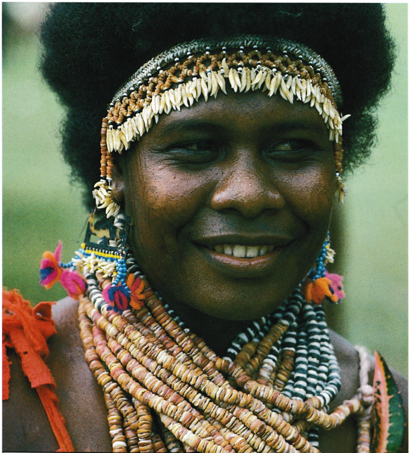
In the Solomon Islands the manufacture of shell money goes back many centuries. Now the people of Langalanga Lagoon on the western coast of Malaita are virtually the only practitioners of this ancient craft. But in the past it was also an industry of the islands of Guadalcanal and Makira.

Spondylus is a type of bivalve; a shell with two halves joined by a "hinge". Several species of this shell occur throughout the tropical South Pacific where they commonly live in the sheltered shallow waters of lagoons or mangrove estuaries. Such habitats are typical of Langalanga Lagoon and the various species of *Spondylus* form the raw material for most of the shell money. But making money is usually hard work, at least for most of us, and for the Malaitans its literal manufacture is a tedious and labour intensive operation.

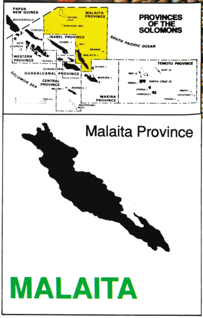
The shells are dived up from the lagoon; virtually no part is wasted, the meat is eaten and the dried halves of the shell are then broken into small pieces. Using a piece of metal and a heavy stone base, each shell fragment is further shaped into a rough disc about a centimetre in diameter. These discs are ground flat between two stones using water as a lubricant and a small hole is then drilled in the centre of each. Traditionally a stone-tipped bow drill was used for this task but now hand drills and steel bits are utilised. Up until this stage of manufacture all the work is done by women, the final "sharpening" as it is called, is done by the men. The drilled discs are threaded on a string of around two to three metres in length — nylon replacing the traditional woven "bush" twine. The string is stretched out on a piece of timber and the rough shell discs abraded to a fine smoothness using a commercial sharpening stone.

Basically, shell money discs come in three colours — red, white, and black, in order of value. The true or "full" red discs — the most valuable — are worked from the edge of the lip of the *Spondylus*, the white come from the rest of the shell. However, many of the white discs are heated on hot stones which change their colour — and value — to a dull orange. The black discs come from other species of bivalves, usually pen shells and various oysters.

The finished shell discs are incorpo-



A Malaitan girl wearing a shell money headband (decorated with dolphin teeth) and a tafuliae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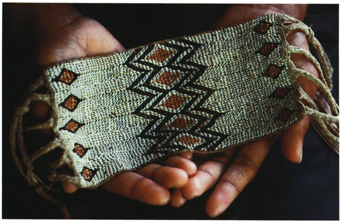
INDISPENSABLE REEFS
Malaita Province
MALAITA

By Mike McCoy



Shell money worked into a headband — for dance and ceremony, not currency

rated into a variety of artifacts. The base unit of "currency" in Langalanga is a *tafuliae*. This consists of ten strings of discs joined together; all three colours are used, though red (or orange) tends to be the dominant colour. The *tafuliae* follow a traditional design; there is little variation from one to another. The standard length is one "fathom" — the distance between a man's outstretched arms — but in practice is usually longer. The value of one *tafuliae* in western currency is about $US120. But this varies according to length, quality, and the amount of "full" red discs that have been used.

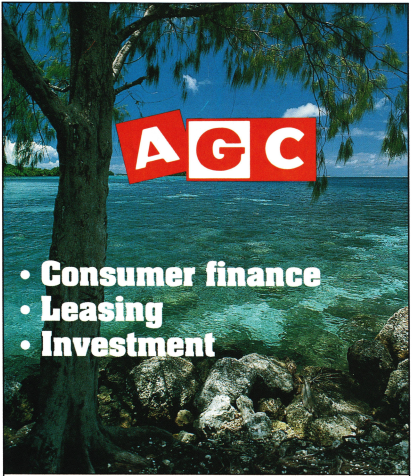
Although *tafuliae* are often exchanged for dollars, their traditional use is still very much alive. For anything up to twenty *tafuliae* you can buy yourself a bride on Malaita. The actual amount varies from area to area on the island; the Lau people of North Malaita have the reputation of charging a high price for their girls. In the past, a man's family paid what they could afford, though nowadays the brideprice is usually fixed and non-negotiable. Malaitans also use their shell money for transactions involving land and as compensation payments to an aggrieved person or clan; these negotiated settlements are usually for infringements of customary laws.

Shell money discs are also made into decorative arm and head bands, though these forms are not used as currency — they are part of the ceremonial dress of dance and feast. A good deal of shell money is now fashioned into single strand necklaces, specifically aimed at the tourist trade. In Langalanga Lagoon such a necklace will cost around five Solomon dollars; by the time they make it to the artifact stores in Honiara this price has tripled.

Centuries ago Malaitan shell money was traded widely throughout the islands of the Solomons and even as far away as the Bismarck Archipelago and the Milne Bay area of Papua New Guinea. It is now sold commonly in the Honiara market and over the past ten or fifteen years the Malaitans have found a ready market for their money on the island of Bougainville in Papua New Guinea, air travel replacing the long and arduous sea voyage.

But generations of *Spondylus* collection has taken a heavy toll. The populations of the shell are now almost extinct in Langalanga Lagoon and most of the raw shell comes from lagoons in the Western Solomons, the people from this area doing a thriving trade supplying the Langalanga people. On virtually any weekday on the man-made islands of Langalanga Lagoon many of the womenfolk — of all ages — will be chipping and drilling shell discs. Their activity has become somewhat of a tourist attraction and the women, ever the opportunists, take advantage of this by charging a small fee to allow photographs of themselves at work. •

(Enquiries regarding visits to Malaita and Langalanga Lagoon can be made to Solomon Airlines and Auki Lodge, PO Box 9, Auki, Malaita respectively.)



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View from Gizo

Lawrie Wickham ... and the view from the Lodge

Lawrie Wickham is a man with clearly defined views. "That's my job at the moment. It looks simple, but I can do it. That's the job I have." Wickham is talking about his first few months as an independent businessman, one of the pioneers of tourism in the spectacular mountain, island, and lagoon setting of the Western Province of the Solomon Islands.

By mid-May this year he was planning to have opened an extension to Koburutauia Lodge. He runs it with his wife Regina, a Gilbertese, in Gizo town, the secluded hundred-year-old town on a tip of a small island that is the provincial seat of government. One part of the lodge, with three guest rooms, is on a hill above the town, with a splendid vista of reefs, lagoons, islets and extinct volcanic peaks that make this region one of the wonders of the South Pacific. The second part of the lodge, aimed at scuba diving business, is on the waterfront, with four guest rooms, a bar/restaurant, and dive shop.

Wickham was born at Hobuhobu, Munda, at the the south end of New Georgia, about 20 minutes from Gizo in a Solomon Airlines Twin Otter. He's from a famous family. Wickhams got to the Solomons from the English county of Somerset in the 1870s and it was a Wickham, a champion swimmer, who went from the Solomons to show Australians the style of swimming called the crawl.

Lawrie Wickham is a 44-year-old who looks 34, tall, lean, fit and full of vitality. He jumped into business in February this year. Perhaps jumped isn't the right word, for he went into it after much thought and a long apprenticeship. From school he attended an Auckland technical college, doing accountancy part time. He was financial secretary for the Bougainville region of the United church and then an executive officer with the Solomons public service. Politics came next with his election to the legislative assembly in 1976. After independence in 1978 he became a cabinet minister, responsible for law and information. But he quit politics in 1982 disenchanted, he said. "Talks, talks, sitting around in Honiara all day doing nothing — I left because I wanted to sweat."

He was hired by Y. Sato and Company, traders, exporters and importers. "I learnt a lot of good things to put me in the right direction. In business you make money; when you don't have the sense in your head you go into politics, that's the way I look at it." Wickham's time with Sato imbued him with an emphatic philosophy. "You must look at who works really hard. It's only when you work hard you make a profit. A lot of talking goes on at government level, at provincial level, but it is the workers who do the job. You ask: do the workers arrive at the office at the right time? I don't go to the club any more. I tell friends there: 'I'll be late. I'm running the lodge.' Cleaning the toilet, sweeping the floor, washing dishes, preparing food. That's the job I do now, that's my business, not wasting time walking the street. If there's anything I'm called to do I go and do it, driving people to and fro. That's my work at the moment. That's the job I have. Leaders can be educated, they can have degrees, but they don't have drive. They take life easy. They say 'don't worry' and do it their way, and when they do it their own way it is out of date, no longer applicable to the present generation."

Wickham's first lodge opened three years ago, run by his wife. At Sato's he worked, observed, and watched for the right time to move. "One thing I noticed. Solomon Islanders are not prepared to support Solomon Island-owned businesses. They buy at a Chinese store or foreign store. It might be a jealously feeling. A lot of Solomon businesses have died because of lack of local support."

Now that he's switched from the wholesale and retail trade to accommodation he has discovered "the principle doesn't change. If you want people to come to you the first thing you offer is the basics — personal service. You must be able to say hullo, you must be able to smile, and you must not rip people off the first time. When people come to you it means they support you. Then you look at what you've done for them. If they don't come you look at your situation. Cost? Attitude? Perhaps your place isn't clean. Probably the service you give is a rip-off. It might be the food you're serving and other people are doing it better than you. Up till now I haven't had any complaints, so I think I'm doing it the way people like it."

Wickham is chairman of the Western Province Tourism Association, and of the Gizo chamber of commerce, business council, and various community service organisations. Despite a population of little more than a thousand people, Gizo is the second largest town of the Solomons Islands. Its prosperity depends on its status as an administrative centre, a port of entry, and a trickle of tourism that is beginning to grow. Some of Gizo's residents worry that it will go into steep decline in the shadow of Noro, at New Georgia just across the water, where a

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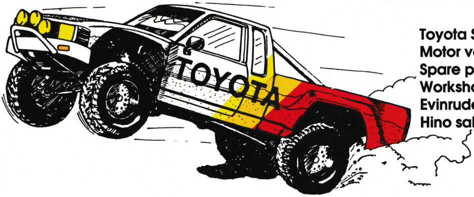

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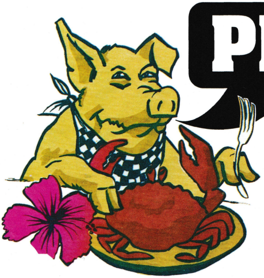

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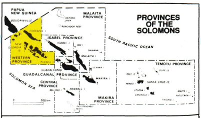
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Western Province
GIZO

tuna canning town is growing. Wickham is putting his money on Gizo. "I like Gizo. It's the administrative centre, it's small and you are walking distance from school and the hospital. Because the place is small people tend to know each other. The spirit it has from the past will remain. Gizo can be the springboard for tourism in the Western Province. It has been created by God and we just can't throw it away."

So far Gizo has only the rudiments of tourism. The lodge and the 10-room Gizo Hotel can accommodate a maximum of about 50 people. There's the dive business, in which Wickham has a 10 percent interest, run by Danny Kennedy, an American. Quite a lot of foreign cruising yachts drop in. But so far no Gizo-based cruise has been established for the exploitation of one of the region's most spectacular cruising grounds. Foreign money and expertise is needed to get the industry going, says Wickham, but not at any price. "Operators, especially people who come and invest here, must be identified and cleared by Honiara. There are certain areas I feel we can do locally well, but in others it depends on the attitude of local people. They welcome tourism but they don't accept that individuals should manage it. They would rather see it run on a communal basis, but to me that doesn't work. In the past we have tried communal farming and fishing but it didn't work. I am running a business for myself; it is easier for me to decide certain issues and work them out. But when we have others coming in, that creates problems." A difficulty about joint ventures between local and foreign partners, says Wickham, is that the locals tend to expect immediate profits and dividends. "Perhaps they really need to wait five years for a return, but sometimes the attitude here is 'Oh, we've put money in, now give us the money.' A lot of education is needed to direct (local) people to the way it should be done." But also "those who are coming in must be able to respect local ways, not just make money. They must have a genuine interest to develop this place at the speed people want it."

In some parts of the West, says Wickham, an emerging irritation is the scale of the payments demanded from visitors by villages for the right to visit their customary lands and reefs. "The Western association is trying to give visitors advice about this in a friendly manner. Don't dive directly for shell, buy it from the village. Get permission from the chief if you want to dive in his area." Villagers were making excessive demands for agreeing to be photographed. "All this paying money didn't happen in the past, but more educated people are now telling parents, or elders or chiefs: 'Get money from them'."

Wickham hasn't so far had much time to learn whether the practice of his philosophies will fully match his expectations. "I'm not saying I'm successful, because I'm just starting. But the eight years I was learning at Y. Sato put me in the right direction." If Gizo's latest entrepreneur always practices what he preaches his direction should be a steadily climbing one. •

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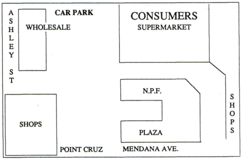
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A story of YSABEL

By Richard Naramara

There are several stories of how our people reached the island of Santa Ysabel, but it is difficult to obtain them from our old men. It was thought I was digging up past stories to raise disputes between them and their descendants. Our people fear victimisation by practioners of black magic who want revenge for current and past troubles. Land disputes are nowadays such a root of suspicion that the elders refused to tell me of the past so as to avoid more trouble.

My own clan, the Phosamogo, claims to have originated from a species of snake found at Borabora island on the western tip of Ysabel. By the time the Spaniard Mendana found Ysabel in 1568 our people had an established tribal system, each tribe ruled by a chief. Headhunting was not originally one of customs. We copied it from the Western Solomons people who killed our people kidnapped others. Consequently there is Ysabel blood in the West. Head were traded but cannibalism, although practiced sometimes prior to headhunting, was only for specific purposes. Killing was a punishment for breakers of moral code or if other tribes, demanded particular deaths. With our system, gloi, a chief would send a basket to the chief of another tribe, asking for the removal or killing of a tribe or people who had upset him. Killing was not frequent in pre-Christian times. Only those who committed incest, or practised black magic, or caused trouble and disharmony within the tribe were killed.

Ysabel dancers

Our tribe was the victim of night raiders. The survivors allied with inland dwellers and Rogna, chief of the Kheukeruo tribe, was told by his god to build a single shrine and fort for the protection of all scattered tribes. This was constructed on a small plateau formed by the merging of four mountains, able to be seen from every direction. Only one side had a path. The fort became the refuge for many people during the headhunting of future decades and it was never raided. Rogna was chosen as senior chief and his successors inherited the duty of staying at the fort. Our chiefs were respected, feared and adored. Although a chief was in some ways elected by lesser chiefs he ruled dictatorially, and with the approval of other chiefs nominated his successor. Although chieftainship passed within a line it could be transferred to a great warrior. The chief or elder of a tribe was held to be infallible. He was never disobeyed; disobedience cost compensation or death. A chief was always respected, never opposed, he could be advised only by the elders and he received and delivered any news from outside. He always received the biggest and best portions of land, food and goods. He always had a nickname, his real name used only by other chiefs and he was served for life by

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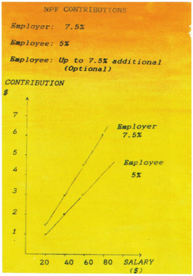
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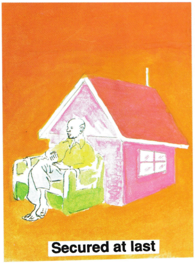

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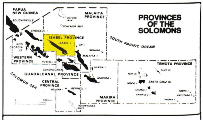
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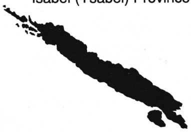

ISABEL

a group of retainers. Commoners could not enter a chief's presence; he initiated and ended any meeting. He had many wives but lived with only one, visiting others according to his inclination. Any man who encountered a chief's wife had to retreat a certain number of paces off the road with his back to the lady till she passed.

After recovering from illness a chief could demand gifts from other chiefs and their people by the despatch of his walking stick. The recipient responded quickly with gifts of tapa and string baskets. Any family who failed to produce something would be killed. The despatch of a basket from one chief to another was like sending a letter. Inside the basket would be tapa cloth, other goods, even babies. The message was that the sender was seeking help, usually in getting rid of an enemy. The contents of the basket was a payment. If many enemies were to be destroyed baskets would be sent to several chiefs.

Chiefs who received the price baskets would feed their warriors in the holy house to drive them mad. After they had destroyed the enemies their chiefs would offer a sacrifice to their god for the victory. After the feast of heads warrior madness would be diluted and the men became normal again.

Various feasts were held from time to time — by a chief or grandfather of a clan before retiring, when visiting relatives and a feast given by strangers for the tribe whose land they had been allowed to settle on. People have misinterpreted the land ceremony as a purchase price and this causes land disputes today. The only way land could be bought was with a very big feast with gifts of custom jewellery, food and other goods worth up to $2000, and during the feast the head of the landowners would announce that the land had been bought.

Every tribe had a shrine and holy place respected by every tribe of the area. These shrines were places for prayers for defence and peace and for offerings. Taro, pigs, fruit, animals and sometimes people were offered at the shrine, with men eating food offered to make spirits and men and women eating food offered to female spirits. A tribesman could not be sacrificed at his tribal shrine. Instead a victim was bought from another tribe — people whose lineages could no longer reproduce, adulterers, troublemakers. Warriors would frighten the victim into unconsciousness so he didn't know what was happening to him. The ritual had to be perfect and anyone making a mistake was killed. The head was taken and hung as a decoration while the body was roasted and eaten by the chiefs, priests and warriors. Our people have a keen sense of humour. Everyday entertainment, and still is, joking, telling funny stories, recalling past events or clan stories. In old days it was important for us to understand our ancestry; relatives meant you knew where to live and find food. And during dancing the tribal moral codes were sung to teach young people how to live a good life. Whoever died first, husband or wife, the other could hold a feast for. This feast gave the children full right to their parent's land, since they could say it was land their parents had died for.

• Richard Naramara, a school teacher at his home island of Santa Ysabel, writes about culture of the people of the island's Hograno/Maringe region. This version is derived from 'O'O, produced by the University of the South Pacific Centre in Honiara.

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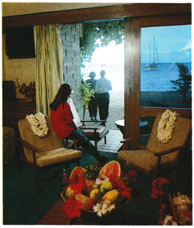

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